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European business leaders on Wednesday lambasted a plan by Japan's ruling party to ban prepaid cellphones to crack down on crimes, saying such a move would discriminate against a foreign-owned carrier.

The European Business Community, the trade-policy arm of Europe's Chamber of Commerce in Japan, said in an annual report that the problem was not with the phones but with inadequate identification checks, noting that no country has banned prepaid phones. The company most likely to be hurt by such a ban is Vodafone KK, the Japanese unit of Britain's mobile giant Vodafone Plc. About 1.5 million people use Vodafone prepaid phones, or 10 percent of its customers in Japan.